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To: Napa Valley Transit Authority Board of Directors

From: John Pearson 

Subject: NVTA Accessible Transportation Study; Napa Older Adults Assessment (NOAA)¹

Recommendation

I'm writing your Board to urge you to direct your staff to connect with the NOAA study leadership to see how the NVTA study can connect and coordinate to compensate with the failures thus far of the NVTA study process. This based on my review of the NVTA survey released in January that will end March 17, 2023, and comments of others as well.

The NVTA survey results, will not, in my view, provide your Board with information about what and how NVTA transportation services, and many others, are being used, nor will it provide any consumer feedback on those services. The study stakeholder group formed has apparently been ignored in the process of developing and releasing the NVTA survey. This does not portend well for the rest of the NVTA study.

Background

During the past year, local public and private organizations have organized and obtained funding to delve deeply into the increasing aging population in Napa County to determine what extent and in what ways are their needs not being met. It's a very ambitious undertaking. The two studies were underway the fall of 2022. The results will set political and financial benchmarks and decisions for a very long time. Accordingly, it is critical that the outcomes of the two studies are valid and reliable.

NVTA: On September 21, 2022 your Board was provided a staff report defining and recommending a study process and a contract consultant. Which you approved. Some key excerpts from that report: **(Highlights are mine for emphasis.)**

"In March 2022, the County of Napa Commission on Aging held a Transportation Needs Summit in Yountville and invited representatives from multiple organizations to resume discussions in preparation for a countywide transportation needs assessment. The summit attendees noted that adequate transportation presents a major challenge for seniors and disabled community members and that it is a collective problem, that needs to be addressed by multiple entities.

NVTA has agreed to take the lead role in the countywide Accessible Transportation needs assessment but with a robust stakeholder participation."

"The Countywide Accessible Transportation Needs assessment will include:

- **Identification and analysis of all existing services and programs**
- Evaluation of gaps in marketing and communications strategies for services
- **Identification of transportation needs and gaps specific to seniors and individuals with disabilities.**
- **Development of transportation service alternatives and programs**
- Analysis of alternatives and programs with a feasibility assessment
- Development of vision, goals, objectives, and policies with an action and funding plan
- **Comprehensive community outreach and feedback assessment**

¹ This memorandum contains my personal views and may or may not be representative of those of other people or organizations.

“Identification and analysis of all existing services and programs”

*The NVTa survey does **not** identify all existing services and programs. NVTa services and other public transportation are lumped into a generic group of “public transit” or “public transportation.”*

“Identification of transportation needs and gaps specific to seniors and individuals with disabilities.”

*There are **NO** items in the survey that refer to disabled people, or conditions to suggest being disabled. If needs and gaps are identified, it will be the result of the survey’s open-ended narrative answers. (Not a valid reliable method)*

“NVTa has agreed to take the lead role in the countywide Accessible Transportation needs assessment but with a robust stakeholder participation.”

“Meet regularly with the staff and stakeholder groups”

A stakeholder’s group was formed, but didn’t meet until January 2023 and then in February.

Far more significant is that the stakeholders were apparently NOT consulted, nor had a chance to review and comment, on the survey.

There are other significant issues with the survey, but just taking the ones mentioned above the results will cripple any meaningful analysis based on two key standards for research and surveys: reliability and validity.

NOAA Study²

Funded by the County of Napa under contract with Collabria Care/Providence, including a consultant contract. A Steering Committee has been meeting monthly, including conducting an extensive review of a very comprehensive and robust survey of Napa County’s Older Adults (age 60 or more). The survey will be released on April 1, 2023, with a very extensive community outreach effort, including assistance from trained volunteers. Trained volunteers will also be leading focus groups throughout the County starting in April.

This survey contains a short section on transportation and transportation and mobility are part of other sections, such as Health & Wellness. The NOAA study has been constructed by using validated survey questions used elsewhere.

Some of this information may be helpful to the NVTa study, as will possibly having combined focus groups, which is why I’m urging you to direct your staff to meet with the NOAA leadership— NOW!

² See website: <https://communityhealthnapavalley.org/noaa/>